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AUTHOR Owens, Thomas R.
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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that secondary school improvement is a result of change at both local high school and school district levels, this study surveyed both superintendents and principals of schools engaged in improvement activities in 35 large urban school districts. Superintendents were asked to identify areas of school improvement in which policy or planning statements had been developed and to characterize the role their district played in school improvement efforts. Partially overlapping the Superintendent Survey, the Principal Survey investigated the following: (1) areas of school effectiveness where plans or policies exist; (2) the district's role in supporting school improvement efforts; (3) special areas of initiating and monitoring school improvement; and (4) self-reported impacts of their school improvement efforts. Perceptions at the central and school levels were generally quite similar. Approximately 80 percent in each group detected some impact from school improvement activities. Increased basic skills scores and increased business/community support were reported by the largest percentages. Approximately 80 percent of districts reported increased academic graduation requirements. About half of the districts are targeting school improvement efforts to special student populations, especially educationally disadvantaged and early school leavers. Appendices contain the Council of the Great City Schools' listing of secondary school improvement issues, the Council's Policy Statement on Equity and Excellence, a tabulation of responses to the two surveys, and a listing of types of documents received from the district and schools to facilitate exchange of school improvement ideas. (LHW)

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FINAL REPORT
FOR THE
COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS
SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STUDY

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FINAL REPORT

FOR THE

COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STUDY

Prepared by

Thomas R. Owens
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

(503) 248-6800, ext. 431

Coordinating Council District
Director of Research and Evaluation

Walter E. Hathaway
Portland Public Schools
501 N. Dixon Street
Portland, Oregon 97227

(503) 249-2000, ext. 206

September 1985

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1413 K Street, N.W., 4th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005 / (202) 371-0163

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The Council of the Great City Schools is a membership organization and an organized coalition of 35 of the largest urban school districts in the United States. The Council was organized to study, develop, implement and evaluate programs designed to secure and ensure quality education and equality of educational opportunities for urban youngsters.

The Council was formally established in 1961 as an outgrowth of concerns by educators and layman that no existing national organization was directly solving or focusing attention on the problems of large urban school systems. It began with informal meetings convened to discuss the educational needs of city children and to exchange information about successful and promising practices. Since that time the Council has sponsored many fact-finding, research and technical assistance programs and has focused the attention of Congress and the nation on issues vital to its members.

Located in Washington, D.C., the Council serves as a communications and service network. These urban school districts are responsible for providing educational services to 11.4% of the pupils in elementary and secondary education in the United States. 25% of the children are from low-income families. Nearly 30% of the minority school population (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians/Pacific Islanders and American Indians) in the nation are in these cities.

In addition to the above activities, the Council promotes communications at several levels among member districts, between member districts and other school systems, and between members and legislators and administration officials who determine federal education policies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	Acknowledgements	2
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Procedures	4
III.	Superintendent Survey Findings	5
IV.	Principal Survey Findings	20
V.	Conclusions	26
	Appendices	
	Appendix A	
	Appendix B	
	Appendix C	
	Appendix D	
	Appendix E	
	Appendix F	

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The Council's Director of Research and Evaluation (DRE) group conceived this study and recommended it to the Research and Policy Committee. That committee, chaired by Superintendent Constance Clayton (Philadelphia) and Board Member, Leonard Clegg (Dallas), provided valuable direction, support, and guidance at every step of this project. The DRE steering group, chaired by Dr. Floraline Stevens (Los Angeles), gave constant shape and support to this effort during the two-year period in which it was conceived, nourished and delivered.

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Fine assistance in completing the final report of this study was provided by staff at NWREL. Dr. Robert Blum helped to construct the surveys. Dr. Rex Hagans encouraged and assisted member districts to respond. Ms. Jolly Butler and Mr. Wes Vollmer catalogued supporting policy documents. They also evaluated and selected exemplary policies in each area. Mrs. Charline Nemeth did the data entry; Mrs. Barbara Blincoe helped construct tables and typed the first draft; and Mrs. Adelle Lund typed and proofread the final manuscript.

Many others too numerous to cite here contributed along the way. They include Council support staff, Board members, Superintendents along with their Deputies and Assistants, and Secondary Education Improvement Program Managers. A special word of thanks is due to the high school principals and teachers who participated. They grounded and guided this study, keeping it accurate and helpful to those whom it is intended to serve ultimately, namely our urban high school staffs and students.

Tom Owens
Walter Hathaway
Portland, OR
September, 1985

I. INTRODUCTION

The popular cry for reform of secondary education has been heard widely throughout the United States, especially since the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced their report "A Nation at Risk" in 1983. After that publication, 54 commissions were formed within an 11-month period to study educational improvement needs. In 1984, the Executive Committee of the Council of Great City Schools received a report from 15 member districts identifying nine critical issues in improving secondary schooling (see Appendix A). As a response to these concerns, the Council contracted, through the Portland Public Schools, with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to conduct a survey of participating school districts to determine what policies existed relative to secondary school improvement, how these policies were being carried out, and what preliminary impact had been noticed. Associated with the Council's interest in identifying secondary school improvement policies and practices was their concern for assuring recognition of the essential interrelatedness of the equity and excellence agendas (see Appendix B). Thus NWREL was directed to include questions to determine the extent to which district school improvement efforts are being targeted on and helpful to special student populations.

The design for this study was based on the premise that secondary school improvement is a result of what happens at both the local high school level as well as at the school district level. Thus two surveys were conducted--one of school districts and the other of a sample of three high schools from each member district.

This study was conducted not only to provide the Council with a picture of school improvement efforts across the country but also to encourage and assist member districts to exchange ideas about policies and practices that work. To facilitate this exchange, participating districts and schools were encouraged to send in examples of their secondary school improvement policies or plans. In addition to cataloging those support documents into 16 areas of school improvement policy, NWREL staff reviewed these policies to identify one or two exemplary policies in each area. The 16 areas of school improvement were derived from a comprehensive review of the research literature on effective schooling, experiences of NWREL staff in providing technical assistance to support school improvement practices, and feedback from the Council's Executive Committee. These same 16 areas were used in constructing questions for the superintendent and principal surveys.

The remainder of this report describes the survey procedures used (Chapter II), the Superintendent Survey findings (Chapter III), Principal Survey findings (Chapter IV), and conclusions (Chapter V). The appendices contain the Council's listing of secondary school improvement issues, the Council's Policy Statement on Equity and Excellence, a tabulation of responses to the two surveys, and a listing of the types of documents NWREL received from the districts and schools.

II. PROCEDURES

In January 1985, NWREL prepared a draft of the Superintendent Survey covering the nine areas of interest to the Council. This draft was reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Council, revised based on their feedback and pilot-tested in the Seattle School District. Based on minor feedback, it was again revised and a Principal Survey developed that contained many of the same items. Superintendents were asked to select three high schools in their district for the Principal Survey. They were asked to select schools that had engaged in some school improvement activities for at least one year and that reflected a diversity of school size, student achievement and minority enrollments.

The Superintendent Survey was sent in February to all 35 district superintendents with a cover letter signed by Samuel B. Husk, Executive Director of the Council of Great City Schools. On April 3, one followup letter went to the superintendents of the 16 districts from whom no response had yet been received and another form, specifying which specific high school surveys were missing, went to 13 districts which had made an incomplete response. Between mid-April and May, followup phone calls were made to the 17 districts which still had incomplete or no returns. On May 10, a letter was sent to the individuals in charge of research in 10 districts from which no response had been received, asking their assistance in getting the data. Between May 10 and June 1, phone calls were made to those individuals. During the August Council meeting in Portland, preliminary results were shared and again districts not previously responding were invited to participate.

Surveys were data entered and analyzed at NWREL. Policy documents received from the districts were organized into folders by district and/or school and coded in terms of 16 areas of school improvement. Two program staff with experience in providing technical assistance in school improvement reviewed each policy document and selected one or two exemplary policies in each of these 16 areas. At the August Council meeting in Portland, the Superintendent Survey data were shared as a preliminary report and initial issues and recommendations based on the discussion of that data were prepared by Dr. Walter Hathaway, Director of Research and Evaluation, from the Portland Public Schools (see Appendix F). It is expected that discussion of this final report of the survey findings will lead to the identification of further issues and a definitive set of recommendations by the Council's Research and Policy Committee and the Council as a whole.

III. SUPERINTENDENT SURVEY FINDINGS

Responses were received from 26 districts in time to enter into this report. An additional district sent in their response after Labor Day, which was too late to be included in the report. Superintendent Survey data are reported by district as well as in aggregate form. Superintendents were asked to identify in 16 areas of school improvement those in which policy or planning statements had been developed since 1980 affecting secondary schools. They also were asked in 14 areas to identify whether their district played a major role, minor role or no role in relation to school improvement efforts. The survey also asked whether school improvement efforts were targeted to any special student populations, how school improvement efforts are monitored, what impacts were noted so far (especially in relation to use of time, the effects of increased academic course graduation requirements, student performance standards, and changes in specific instructional practices).

Although school improvement efforts in some cases had been undertaken for only a year or two, at least 80 percent of the districts reported some type of impact. The three most frequently reported impacts were: increased scores in basic skills (reported by 81 percent of the districts), increased business/community support (73 percent), and increased student attendance (54 percent). Table 1 shows the percentage of districts reporting impact in 11 areas. Twelve percent reported no impact noted yet. These findings are shown for each district in Table 2. A separate question on the survey focused specifically on the impact of school improvement efforts on use of student time. Two-thirds of the districts reported increases in student homework assignments and time allocated to academic skills while less than a third reported lengthening of the school day or school year.

In addition to impact noted from school improvement efforts, 81 percent of the districts also reported increases in the academic course graduation requirements since 1980. These increases in graduation requirements are likely to take at least several years to be noted. However, even at the present time a third of the districts reported losing up to 20 percent of their elective teachers and at least a quarter of the districts noted a loss of up to 20 percent of their elective courses and a corresponding decrease in student enrollments. As a result of increased graduation requirements, at least a third of the districts noted increased testing and increased parent/community support. In contrast, only four percent reported a decrease in parent/community support. Specific changes in instructional practices as a result of school improvement efforts were noted by over 80 percent of the districts. At least half reported significant increases in expectations for student learning, curriculum becoming more based on clear goals and objectives, and expectations for quality instruction. Table 3 shows the percentage of districts reporting that each of 15 areas of instructional practice have increased greatly. Appendix B shows more fully the percentage of districts reporting these practices have increased greatly, increased slightly or not changed. Approximately a quarter of the districts reported no change in grouping students to promote effective instruction or in using incentives to build student motivation. Responses by individual district are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 1

REPORTED IMPACT FROM SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Type of Impact	Percentage of Districts Reporting Impact
Increased Scores in Basic Skills by Students	81
Increased Business/Community Support	73
Increase in Student Attendance	54
Students Taking More Advanced Courses	39
Decreased Vandalism	35
Improvement in Student Attitude Toward School	35
Greater Teacher Satisfaction	31
Increased Scores in Areas Other Than Basic Skills	23
Reduction in Students Taking Remedial Courses	12
Less Teacher Turnover	8
(No Impact Noted Yet)	12

TABLE 2

DISTRICTS REPORTING SPECIFIC IMPACT FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

AREAS	DISTRICTS																										
	ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	BUFFALO	CHICAGO	CLEVELAND	COLUMBUS	DADE COUNTY	DALLAS	DENVER	DETROIT	INDIANAPOLIS	MILWAUKEE	MINNEAPOLIS	NASHVILLE	NORFOLK	OAKLAND	OMAHA	PITTSBURGH	PORTLAND	ROCHESTER	ST. PAUL	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	TOLEDO	TUCSON
NO IMPACT NOTED YET												X											X			
LESS TEACHER TURNOVER			X																							
GREATER TEACHER SATISFACTION			X			X		X			X							X			X					X
INCREASED SCORES IN BASIC SKILLS BY STUDENTS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X				X
INCREASED SCORES IN AREAS OTHER THAN BASIC SKILLS		X		X				X								X			X								X
IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL	X		X				X			X					X	X		X			X	X					
STUDENT TAKING MORE ADVANCED COURSES		X						X			X	X		X	X		X	X					X	X			
REDUCTIONS IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS NEEDING TO TAKE REMEDIAL COURSES		X		X																							X
DECREASED VANDALISM	X		X		X				X			X	X				X							X			
INCREASE IN STUDENT ATTENDANCE		X	X		X		X			X	X	X	X			X	X				X		X	X			
INCREASED BUSINESS/COMMUNITY SUPPORT	X	X	X		X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X				X

TABLE 3

CHANGES REPORTED IN INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Instructional Changes	Percentage Reporting "Increased Greatly"
High Expectations for Student Learning	58
Curriculum Based on Clear Goals and Objectives	50
High Expectations for Quality Instruction	50
Clear and Focused Instruction	46
Learning Process Closely Monitored	46
Explicit Standards for Classroom Behavior	42
Students Who Don't Understand Are Retaught	35
Class Time Used More for Learning	31
Parents Are Involved	31
Discipline is Firm and Consistent	27
Students Grouped to Promote Effective Instruction	23
Positive Personal Interactions Between Teachers and Students	23
Students Carefully Oriented to Lessons	23
Incentives and Rewards Used for Motivation	19
Smooth and Efficient Classroom Routines	15

TABLE 4
DISTRICTS REPORTING VARIOUS INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES HAVE "INCREASED GREATLY"

AREAS	ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	BUFFALO	CHICAGO	CLEVELAND	COLUMBUS	DADE COUNTY	DALLAS	DENVER	DETROIT	INDIANAPOLIS	MILWAUKEE	MINNEAPOLIS	NASHVILLE	NORFOLK	OAKLAND	OMAHA	PITTSBURGH	PORTLAND	ROCHESTER	ST. PAUL	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	TOLEDO	TULSA
THE CURRICULUM IS BASED ON CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X					X		
HIGH EXPECTATIONS EXIST FOR STUDENT LEARNING		X	X	X	X				X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X					X		X
HIGH EXPECTATIONS EXIST FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X					X		
STUDENTS ARE CAREFULLY ORIENTED TO LESSONS		X										X				X		X	X							
INSTRUCTION IS CLEAR AND FOCUSED		X	X	X					X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X							
LEARNING PROGRESS IS MONITORED CLOSELY	X	X	X	X					X	X		X		X	X				X					X		X
STUDENTS WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND ARE RETAUGHT	X	X				X					X	X	X					X								X
CLASS TIME IS USED FOR LEARNING	X	X	X							X	X	X				X		X								
CLASSROOM ROUTINES ARE SMOOTH AND EFFICIENT		X	X							X		X														
STUDENTS ARE GROUPED TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION				X						X	X	X												X		
STANDARDS FOR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR ARE EXPLICIT		X	X		X					X	X	X		X	X	A	X				X					
PERSONAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ARE POSITIVE		X								X		X						X			X					
INCENTIVES AND REWARDS ARE USED TO BUILD MOTIVATION		X	X									X														X
DISCIPLINE IS FIRM AND CONSISTENT			X		X					X		X			X	X					X			X		
PARENTS ARE INVOLVED	X	X		X								X			X	X								X		X

Some districts reported having a plan or policy for each of 16 areas of school improvement. However, the percentage of districts reporting such policies varied widely from one area to another. For example, while 92 percent reported policies regarding standards for promotion or graduation, only 27 percent reported policies regarding rewards for staff performance. Table 5 shows the percentage of districts having policies or plans in 16 areas. Since at least a third of the districts reported not having a policy in rewards for staff performance, effective school climate, rewards for student achievement, criteria defining the district's vision of secondary educational excellence, and reorganization of schools or students, we are showing which districts reported having policies in each area (see Table 6).

Districts were also asked if they had major concerns in any of these 16 policy areas. As indicated in Table 7, a third or more of the districts expressed a major emerging concern regarding rewards for staff performance and rewards for student achievement.

Table 8 displays the number of policies and plans mailed to NWREL by area while Table 9 shows the results of NWREL's assessment of exemplary policies in each of these 16 areas related to school improvement. Exemplary policies or plans were selected at both the district and school level.

The last three tables have been used effectively by the Council in planning one of the sessions for its annual meeting in Pittsburgh. They identified several areas where many districts expressed emerging concern and where relatively few had policy statements. They then invited representatives from districts and schools having exemplary policies in these areas to share their policy statements and discuss why and how these policies were developed.

As stated in the introduction to this report, we view secondary school improvement as a responsibility of both the local school and district. Superintendents were asked to specify whether they felt their district office played a major role, minor role or no role in relation to 14 school improvement support activities. Table 10 indicates the percentage of districts feeling they played a major role through these activities. Virtually all districts felt they play a major role through testing and monitoring while only 69 percent felt they play a major role in teacher needs assessment. Table 11 displays this information by district.

Half of the districts indicated that their school improvement efforts were targeted to any special student populations. Populations most frequently mentioned were school leavers and educationally disadvantaged.

Eighty percent of the districts reported an increase in academic course graduation requirements since 1980. Table 12 shows the percentage of districts reporting minimum numbers of various credits needed for graduation. As can be seen in that table, English is the subject required most frequently for four years.

Districts reported a variety of procedures used to monitor school improvement efforts. Most commonly used is the regular testing program while less than half of the districts reported using as monitoring processes student surveys, attitude measures, vandalism measures or teacher-made tests. Table 13 indicates the range of monitoring procedures used.

TABLE 5

SECONDARY SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AREAS
FOR WHICH DISTRICT POLICIES OR PLANS EXIST

Area	Percentage of Districts Having Plan or Policy
Standards for Promotion or Graduation	92
District Priority Goals for Improvement	89
Standards for Student Conduct	89
Expectations that Principals be Instructional Leaders	85
Parent Involvement	85
Homework	81
Assessment of Student Needs and Academic Progress	81
Monitoring of Local School Improvement Efforts	81
High Expectations for Student Performance	77
Alignment of Objectives, Curriculum and Testing	77
Instructional Excellence	73
Reorganization of Schools or Students	65
Criteria Defining the District's Vision of Secondary Educational Excellence	62
Rewards for Student Achievement	54
Effective School Climate	50
Rewards for Staff Performance	27

TABLE 6

DISTRICTS REPORTING EXISTING POLICIES OR PLANS IN AREAS AFFECTING SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

AREAS	DISTRICTS																										
	ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	BUFFALO	CHICAGO	CLEVELAND	COLUMBUS	DADE COUNTY	DALLAS	DENVER	DETROIT	INDIANAPOLIS	MILWAUKEE	MINNEAPOLIS	NASHVILLE	NORFOLK	OAKLAND	OMAHA	PITTSBURGH	PORTLAND	ROCHESTER	ST. PAUL	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	TOLEDO	TULSA
CRITERIA DEFINING THE DISTRICT'S VERSION OF SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE			X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		X		X		X
DISTRICT PRIORITY GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	
EXPECTATIONS THAT PRINCIPALS BE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT NEEDS AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X		X	X	X
MONITORING OF LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X
STANDARDS FOR STUDENT CONDUCT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
STANDARDS FOR PROMOTION OF GRADUATION	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
REWARDS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT		X	X	X				X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X				X		X	X	
REWARDS FOR STAFF PERFORMANCE							X	X	X		X				X							X				
INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X			X	X
HOMEWORK	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE			X		X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X			X	
*ALIGNMENT OF OBJECTIVES, CURRICULUM AND TESTING	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X	X	X
REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS OR STUDENTS	X	X			X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X			X			X	X	X	X

TABLE 7

DISTRICTS REPORTING AREAS OF MAJOR EMERGING CONCERN AFFECTING SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

AREAS	ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	BUFFALO	CHICAGO	CLEVELAND	COLUMBUS	DADE COUNTY	DALLAS	DENVER	DETROIT	INDIANAPOLIS	MILWAUKEE	MINNEAPOLIS	NASHVILLE	NORFOLK	OAKLAND	OMAHA	PITTSBURGH	PORTLAND	ROCHESTER	ST. PAUL	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	TOLEDO	TULSA
CRITERIA DEFINING THE DISTRICT'S VERSION OF SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE	X	X				X									X	X	X			X		X				
DISTRICT PRIORITY GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT		X			X												X					X				
HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE	X	X			X												X			X					X	
EXPECTATIONS THAT PRINCIPALS BE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS		X			X				X								X									
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT NEEDS AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS		X			X											X	X			X		X				
MONITORING OF LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS		X		X	X	X										X	X									
STANDARDS FOR STUDENT CONDUCT																				X						
STANDARDS FOR PROMOTION OF GRADUATION		X																		X						
REWARDS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	X	X		X				X		X			X	X								X				X
REWARDS FOR STAFF PERFORMANCE	X	X	X	X	X					X		X	X	X		X	X	X				X		X	X	X
INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE		X														X	X			X		X				
HOMEWORK					X				X							X	X					X				
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT																	X		X			X				
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE	X	X		X					X								X			X		X				X
ALIGNMENT OF OBJECTIVES, CURRICULUM AND TESTING					X											X	X			X	X					
REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS OR STUDENTS				X	X												X				X					

TABLE 8

TABULATION OF THE NUMBER OF POLICIES AND PLANS
RECEIVED FROM PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

	POLICY		PLAN	
	Dist.	Schl.	Dist.	Schl.
1. Criteria defining the District's vision of secondary educational excellence	4	7	1	1
2. District priority goals for improvement	8	6	1	2
3. High expectations for student performance	4	2	3	4
4. Expectations that principals be instructional leaders	3	0	3	4
5. Assessment of student needs and academic progress	7	4	5	10
6. Monitoring of local school improvement efforts	3	0	5	4
7. Standards for student conduct	13	16	7	14
8. Standards for promotion or graduation	13	10	6	7
9. Rewards for student achievement	1	0	0	9
10. Rewards for staff performance	1	0	1	2
11. Instructional excellence	3	4	2	2
12. Homework	7	4	0	3
13. Parental involvement	8	2	3	8
14. Effective school climate	5	5	4	6
15. Alignment of objectives, curriculum and testing	1	0	2	0
16. Reorganization of schools or students	6	2	4	0
17. Public relations/school-community relations	1	4	0	3
18. Use of time/time-on-task	0	2	0	1
19. Articulation (feeders)	0	2	0	0

TABLE 9

IDENTIFICATION OF EXEMPLARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT POLICIES
FOUND AT THE DISTRICT AND HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

	District Policy	School Policy
Criteria defining the District's vision of secondary educational excellence	D, M*	ME
District priority goals for improvement	P, D	BTW, ME
High expectations for student performance	P, D	BTW
Expectations that principals be instructional leaders	I, M	L
Assessment of student needs and academic progress	C, M	
Monitoring of local school improvement efforts	P, Mi	BTW
Standards for student conduct	C, I	ME, A
Standards for promotion or graduation	M, D	L, B
Rewards for student achievement		G, L
Rewards for staff performance	D	L, ME
Instructional excellence	D*	L, ME
Homework	I	BTW, A
Parental involvement	M*	C, Mi
Effective school climate	P, M*	L*
Alignment of objectives, curriculum and testing	C, I	
Reorganization of schools or students	P, M	L*

Codes:

* More a plan than a policy, but has policy implicit
A American High School (Dade County, Florida)
B Beechcroft High School (Columbus, Ohio)
BTW Booker T. Washington High School (Norfolk, Virginia)
C Cleveland School District (Ohio)
D Dade County School District (Florida)
G George Henry Corliss High School (Chicago, Illinois)
I Indianapolis School District (Indiana)
L Lincoln-West High School (Cleveland, Ohio)
M Minneapolis School District (Minnesota)
ME Miami Edison High School (Miami, Florida)
Mi Milwaukee School District (Wisconsin)
P Portland School District (Oregon)

TABLE 10

AREAS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
WHERE THE DISTRICT PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE

Area	Percentage of Districts Reporting a Major Role
Conducting Testing and Monitoring	96
Staff Selection and Assignment	89
Providing Teacher Inservice	89
Curriculum Development Assistance	89
Assistance to Schools in Obtaining Needed Resources	89
Districtwide Priority Goals for Improvement	86
Screening and Selecting Texts and Resource Materials	85
Developing and Refining Instructional Objectives	85
Providing Administrative Inservice	85
Procedures to Monitor and Support Local Efforts	81
Communicating Local School Improvement Findings to Staff and Community	77
Collecting and Sharing Research Findings	73
Procedures for Coordinating Among School Efforts	73
Conducting Teacher Needs Assessment	69

TABLE 11
DISTRICTS REPORTING A MAJOR ROLE IN SUPPORT OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN PARTICULAR AREAS

AREAS	DISTRICTS																										
	ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	BUFFALO	CHICAGO	CLEVELAND	COLOMBUS	DADE COUNTY	DALLAS	DENVER	DETROIT	INDIANAPOLIS	MILWAUKEE	MINNEAPOLIS	NASHVILLE	NORFOLK	OAKLAND	OMAHA	PITTSBURGH	PORTLAND	ROCHESTER	ST. PAUL	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	TOLEDO	TULSA
SETS UP PROCEDURES TO MONITOR AND SUPPORT LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
ESTABLISHES PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATING AMONG SCHOOL EFFORTS	X	X			X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
SELECTS AND ASSIGNS STAFF TO ENHANCE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
DEVELOPS AND REFINES INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X
CONDUCTS TESTING AND MONITORING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
PROVIDES ADMINISTRATIVE INSERVICE	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
PROVIDES TEACHER INSERVICE	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
COLLECTS AND/OR CONDUCTS AND SHARES RESEARCH FINDINGS			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		
ASSISTS WITH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
CONDUCTS TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X				X				
SCREENS AND SELECTS TEXTS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X
ESTABLISHES DISTRICTWIDE PRIORITY GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
ASSISTS SCHOOLS IN OBTAINING NEEDED RESOURCES	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
COMMUNICATES LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FINDINGS TO STAFF AND COMMUNITY	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		

TABLE 12

PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS
REQUIRING VARIOUS NUMBERS OF CARNEGIE CREDITS
FOR GRADUATION

	Units Required				
	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	NOT REPORTED
ENGLISH			19	62	19
MATHEMATICS	8	50	16	8	19
SCIENCE	31	39	16	4	10
SOCIAL STUDIES	4	23	50	8	15
FOREIGN LANGUAGES	12	4			84
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	8	4	4	8	76

TABLE 13

DISTRICT PROCEDURES USED TO MONITOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Procedure	Percentage of Districts Reporting Use
District's Regular Testing Program	96
Student Attendance	85
Percent of Students Passing Graduation Requirements	77
Student Promotions/Retentions	73
Student Referrals for Disciplinary Purposes	73
Student Grade Reports	65
Staff Surveys/Feedback	65
Parent/Community Response Measures	65
Percent of Students Taking Various Courses	58
Regular School Progress Reports	54
Teacher-Made Tests	46
School Vandalism Measures	46
Student Attitude Measures	46
Student Surveys/Feedback	39

IV. PRINCIPAL SURVEY FINDINGS

A Principal Survey was completed and returned by 71 schools in 28 of the 35 Great City School Districts. The survey paralleled some of the questions on the Superintendent Survey. Questions identified areas of school effectiveness where plans or policies exist, looked at the district's role in supporting various school improvement efforts, determined any special areas of initiating and monitoring school improvement, and examined self-reported impacts of their school improvement efforts.

A tabulation of responses to the Principal Survey appears in Appendix C. Table 14 indicates the percentage of schools reporting the presence of plans or policies.

Eighty percent or more of the principals reported school policies or plans existing to cover standards for promotion or graduation, standards for student conduct, priority goals for improvement, and high expectations for student performance. Principals and superintendent views on existing policies were quite similar. Out of 16 areas, there was only one where the two groups differed by more than 20 percent. Seventy-eight percent of the principals reported policies regarding student achievement while only 54 percent were reported by superintendents. This difference probably is due to the fact that student achievement policies or plans are more commonly set at the individual high school level.

Areas of school effectiveness for which many schools do not have plans or policies, but which are regarded as a major emerging concern by a quarter or more of the schools, are: rewards for staff performance (48 percent), assessment of student needs and academic progress (30 percent), criteria defining the school's vision of educational excellence (27 percent), and the principal's role as instructional leader (25 percent).

Schools were asked to indicate the extent to which their district plays a role in supporting various school improvement efforts. Principals rated their district as playing a major support role, a minor role, or no role. Table 15 shows the district support ratings for 14 areas. Three-quarters or more of the schools felt their district played a major role in: establishing districtwide priority goals for improvement, screening and selecting texts and resource materials, conducting testing and monitoring, assisting schools in obtaining needed resources, assisting with curriculum development, and developing and refining instructional objectives. At the other extreme, approximately 10 percent of the schools felt their district played no role in conducting teacher needs assessment nor in selecting and assigning staff to enhance school improvement efforts.

Similar to the superintendent survey, 56 percent of the principals reported that their school's improvement efforts were targeted to special populations such as school leavers and educationally disadvantaged. Potential school leavers were identified mainly through monitoring student academic and disciplinary records.

TABLE 14

AREAS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS
FOR WHICH PLANS OR POLICIES EXIST
AS REPORTED BY PRINCIPALS

Areas	Percentage of Principals Reporting
Standards for promotion or graduation	96
Standards for student conduct	94
Priority goals for improvement	83
High expectations for student performance	80
Rewards for student achievement	78
Homework	78
Monitoring school improvement efforts	72
Effective school climate	69
Criteria defining the school's vision of educational excellence	68
Parental involvement	68
Principal's role as instructional leader	68
Alignment of objectives, curriculum and testing	66
Instructional excellence	63
Assessment of student needs and academic progress	62
Reorganization of the school or students	47
Rewards for staff performance	39

TABLE 15

AREAS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS
JUDGED BY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TO HAVE MAJOR DISTRICT SUPPORT

Areas Receiving Major District Support	Percentage of Principals Reporting
Establishes districtwide priority goals for improvement	93
Screens and selects texts and resource materials	82
Conducts testing and monitoring	80
Assists schools in obtaining needed resources	79
Assists with curriculum development	76
Develops and refines instructional objectives	76
Collects and/or conducts and shares research findings	73
Provides administrative inservice	72
Provides teacher inservice	66
Sets up procedures to monitor and support local school improvement efforts	65
Communicates local school improvement findings to staff and community	62
Establishes procedures for coordinating among school efforts	58
Selects and assigns staff to enhance school improvement efforts	54
Conducts teacher needs assessment	49

TABLE 16

AREAS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT NOTED BY PRINCIPALS

Areas	Percentage of Principals Reporting
Increased scores in basic skills by students	65
Improvement in student attitude toward school	65
Increase in student attendance	58
Increased business/community support	55
Greater teacher satisfaction	51
More advanced courses taken	45
Decreased vandalism	44
Increased scores in areas other than basic skills	32
Less teacher turnover	21

At least half of the schools reported that their school improvement efforts affected the amount of student homework assignments, services to students beyond regular school hours, and increased time allocated to academic skills.

While 11 percent of the principals noted no impact yet from their school improvement efforts, the rest identified one or more areas of impact. Over half of the principals reported impact in increased basic skill scores, student attitude toward school, increased student attendance, increased business/community support, and greater teacher satisfaction. Other areas of impact are noted in Table 16.

Student progress in school improvement was monitored primarily through student report cards, student attendance, and the district's regular testing program.

Ninety percent of the principals reported that their district had increased academic course graduation requirements since 1980. As a result, a quarter of the principals reported losing up to 20 percent of their elective teachers and courses. Thirty percent or more of the principals also reported that as a result of increased graduation requirements, students are completing more demanding courses, testing has increased and more remedial courses have been added. Thirteen percent reported increased student dropouts. The number of dropouts resulting from increased graduation requirements is likely to increase in the future as the graduation requirements get applied to newly entering 9th grade students.

Three-quarters of the principals indicated that their school improvement effects resulted in changes in instructional practices. Table 17 lists the instructional practices where major increases were noted by principals. The instructional changes seen to have increased the most were high expectations for quality instruction and student learning. Incentives to build student motivation were seen to have changed least.

TABLE 17

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES SEEN AS INCREASING GREATLY BY PRINCIPALS

Instructional Practices	Percentage of Principals Reporting
High Expectations for Quality Instruction	49
High Expectations for Student Learning	48
Firm and Consistent Discipline	45
Explicit Standards for Classroom Behavior	44
Goal Based Curriculum	44
Closely Monitored Learning	41
Clear and Focused Instruction	38
Effective Student Grouping	34
Careful Orientation to Lessons	31
Class Time Used for Learning	28
Incentives Used to Build Motivation	27
Smooth Classroom Routines	25
Positive Student-Teacher Interactions	23
Students Retaught if Needed	21

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study incorporated previously expressed interests of the Council together with findings from the school effectiveness literature to provide a comprehensive framework for surveying member districts and a sample of their high schools. Since surveys are limited to the self-perceptions of the persons surveyed, this study deliberately repeated questions for both principals and superintendents in the same districts to help cross-validate findings. In general, perceptions at the central and school levels were quite similar. Approximately 80 percent in each group had detected some impact from school improvement activities. Increased basic skills scores and increased business/community support were reported by the largest percentages of both principals and superintendents. As might be expected, the district's role in supporting school improvement was seen more positively by superintendents in 13 of 14 areas. The interesting exception was that principals were even more positive in recognizing the contribution of centrally established districtwide priority goals for improvement. Ninety-three percent of the principals, compared with 86 percent of the superintendents, viewed this as a major district support.

In general, the purpose of this study was not to develop recommendations but to share information for the Council and its members to use in developing individual and Council-wide action plans. Nevertheless, some procedural and programmatic recommendations are offered below as illustrations of the possible uses of this study.

Approximately 80 percent of the districts report increases in academic graduation requirements. It is still too soon to detect some of the significant impact that these increased graduation requirements will have on curriculum, students and staff in urban districts. However, already about a quarter of those surveyed have seen a decrease of up to 20 percent in elective courses. The impact these changes may have on less academically gifted youngsters will need to be monitored in future years. It is recommended that Council districts be surveyed again in three years to see what long term impact school improvement efforts and changes in graduation requirements will have on students.

About half of the districts reported that their school improvement efforts are being targeted to special student populations, especially to educationally disadvantaged and school leavers. Although potential school leavers are being identified through monitoring student academic and disciplinary records, test scores and staff nominations, approximately a third of the districts reported having no systematic procedure for identifying potential school leavers. At the individual high school level, things look more optimistic but even here 16 percent of the principals reported having no systematic way of identifying potential school leavers. The Council may want to develop and share some systematic procedures for identifying such youth.

Surveys of school improvement efforts by Council districts can be an important starting point for districts to share experiences of what has worked and why. Since the focus for the present study has been primarily on policy, it is recommended that the Council hold a session at its annual fall conference to encourage high schools and districts having exemplary policies in areas where other districts are lacking policy to share their policies and describe why and how they were created and what impact they have had. Likewise, members from one district may want to visit another district having an exemplary area of secondary school improvement to observe how the process is working and how it might be adopted in their district.

This study pointed out that while districts have policies regarding many areas of school improvement, less than 40 percent had a policy dealing with rewards for staff performance. Indeed, this area was considered by half of the districts to be a major emerging concern. Given the problem of attracting and holding excellent school staff in urban districts, it is recommended that the Council continue to give attention to how high quality staff can be recruited and rewarded.

It is recommended that a more detailed observational study be made across districts of several school improvement activities that have been reported here to describe in greater detail how they are working. For example, since a third of the districts do not have a systematic procedure for monitoring potential school leavers, districts that are doing a lot in this area should be studied more closely to see what works.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

AREAS OF INTEREST EXPRESSED BY THE COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

The Executive Committee received a report from the individuals designated from 15 of the member districts to identify the critical issues in Improving Secondary Schooling. The issues and concerns were:

1. What new systemwide policies for secondary school improvement are we setting; how are the resources to carry them out being pre-identified within the system's budget priorities and tradeoffs; and how do we assure they will have meaningful positive effects?

2. What central policy direction and related support are we providing to High School Based Improvement Planning and Implementation Efforts, and how are those efforts proceeding?

3. How are we identifying the students who are "At Risk" of leaving school early and how are we identifying their special needs and working with them to help them complete their high school education? What is the role of and what's happening to special programs for the educationally disadvantaged, special education, limited English-speaking and other special need students?

4. What changes are taking place in the way time during the school day is structured and how are such matters as staffing and cost being handled?

5. What test and other data do we use to monitor the success of our efforts to improve secondary education?

6. What's happening to vocational/technical education and elective programs and staff as well as to students "At Risk" as we respond to the state and local pressure to raise course graduation requirements? (How are we preserving a curriculum responsive to the diverse interests and needs of all students?)

7. What student performance standards are being set for promotion and graduation; how are they measured; and what are the effects on students and their systems?

8. To what extent are mastery learning and individualized instruction being used at the secondary school level?

9. What are we doing through staff selection, evaluation and development to help principals and teachers respond to the changing challenges of secondary education and to assess their readiness to respond? (In particular, how do we encourage and support principals and teachers to take student-based, as well as subject-based, approaches to secondary schooling?)

APPENDIX B

The Council of the Great City Schools

Policy Statement on Equity and Excellence

"ALL, REGARDLESS OF RACE OR CLASS OR ECONOMIC STATUS, ARE ENTITLED TO A FAIR CHANCE AND TO THE TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING THEIR INDIVIDUAL POWERS OF MIND AND SPIRIT TO THE UTMOST. THIS PROMISE MEANS THAT ALL CHILDREN BY VIRTUE OF THEIR OWN EFFORTS, COMPETENTLY GUIDED, CAN HOPE TO ATTAIN THE MATURE AND INFORMED JUDGEMENT NEEDED TO SECURE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT, AND TO MANAGE THEIR OWN LIVES, THEREBY SERVING NOT ONLY THEIR OWN INTERESTS BUT ALSO THE PROGRESS OF SOCIETY ITSELF." (A NATION AT RISK)

This quote from the Commission on Excellence Report is the philosophical center piece of its message to the American people. But in order for there to be a serious and sustained reform of the quality of our nation's schools, governments at all levels must recommit themselves to the issue of equity.

Truly, in the past 25 years this nation has been making substantial progress in the area of equity. This progress manifests itself in every phase of our society, in every phase of life and, in particular, in our public schools. These advances, especially for those who have been the victims of past discrimination, were largely made through the efforts of leaders at the national level whose duty it was to protect and advance those rights. Equity in this context has come to mean that every person, if truly given the same access and opportunity, should also have the same relative achievement. Again, it will take largely national policies and fiscal commitment to provide the "tools" for those who still remain isolated from the paths to excellence.

Governments at all levels, especially at the Federal and State levels, must expend the resources necessary to support programs which have already been authorized to increase access to educational opportunities. These resources need to be focused on the institutions and places where the handicapped, the poor, and other high need populations are concentrated. These resources need to be directed to help those who have been disenfranchised gain entry to those programs that will open new heights and new horizons of accomplishments.

The responsibility of sustaining the future economic well being of this nation will rest to a large extent on the efforts of Blacks, Hispanics and women. It is in the best interest of our country to ensure that these historically underserved populations receive the best possible education possible. To provide less is to sow the seed of future failings.

APPENDIX C

GREAT CITY SCHOOLS SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STUDY

SUPERINTENDENT'S SURVEY
(N=26)

Name of Person Responding to this Superintendent's Survey

_____

Postion supt 7, research/eval director 7, assoc supt 6, adm asst 4, other 2

District 26 out of 35 districts responded

Work Telephone Number ( )

Name of Person Distributing and Collecting Principal Surveys, if different from above

_____

Work Telephone Number ( )

Policy and Planning Statements

1. Does your district have policy or planning statements developed since 1980 affecting secondary schools that cover any of the areas listed below? Please check those areas explicitly covered and attach a copy of the policy or plan. If no policy or plan exists in an area but it is a major emerging concern, please check the second column.

	Percent	
	Have a Plan or Policy	A Major Emerging Concern
CRITERIA DEFINING THE DISTRICT'S VISION OF SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE	62	31
DISTRICT PRIORITY GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT	89	12
HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE	77	19
EXPECTATIONS THAT PRINCIPALS BE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS	85	12
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT NEEDS AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS	81	19
MONITORING OF LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	81	19
STANDARDS FOR STUDENT CONDUCT	89	4
STANDARDS FOR PROMOTION OR GRADUATION	92	4
REWARDS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	54	31
REWARDS FOR STAFF PERFORMANCE	27	58

	Have a Plan or Policy	A Major Emerging Concern
INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE	73	15
HOMEWORK	81	19
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	85	8
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE	50	31
ALIGNMENT OF OBJECTIVES, CURRICULUM AND TESTING	77	19
REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS OR STUDENTS	65	19

OTHER (Please list)_____

_____

Please send copies of all relevant policy and planning statements with the completed survey.

District Administrative Support

2. In what ways does the district provide support for various school improvement efforts? For each area listed below, please indicate if the district plays a major role, minor role or no role at the present time.

In relation to school improvement efforts our district:	Major Role	Minor Role	No Role	No Response
SETS UP PROCEDURES TO MONITOR AND SUPPORT LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	81	15	0	4
ESTABLISHES PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATING AMONG SCHOOL EFFORTS	73	15	0	12
SELECTS AND ASSIGNS STAFF TO ENHANCE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	89	4	0	8
DEVELOPS AND REFINES INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	85	12	0	4
CONDUCTS TESTING AND MONITORING	96	0	0	4
PROVIDES ADMINISTRATIVE INSERVICE	85	8	0	8
PROVIDES TEACHER INSERVICE	89	4	0	8

In relation to school improvement efforts our district:	Major Role	Minor Role	No Role	No Response
COLLECTS AND/OR CONDUCTS AND SHARES RESEARCH FINDINGS	73	19	0	8
ASSISTS WITH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	89	4	4	4
CONDUCTS TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT	69	19	0	12
SCREENS AND SELECTS TEXTS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS	85	8	4	4
ESTABLISHES DISTRICTWIDE PRIORITY GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT	86	8	0	4
ASSISTS SCHOOLS IN OBTAINING NEEDED RESOURCES	89	4	4	4
COMMUNICATES LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FINDINGS TO STAFF AND COMMUNITY	77	12	0	12

OTHER (Please list) public relations 8 percent

Please attach any documents (plans, policies, guidelines, handbooks, papers, etc.) that describe support provided for various school improvements.

Special Needs Students

3. Are your district's school improvement efforts targeted to any special student populations?

50 YES If yes to which populations, [illegible]
(educationally disadvantaged, 35%, school leavers, 8%)

46 NO

4 NO RESPONSE

4. Are there any segments of students not being reached by school improvement efforts?

20 YES If yes, which groups? school leavers 12%

65 NO

15 NO RESPONSE

5. How are potential school leavers being identified? (Check all that apply)

_31_ NOT BEING SYSTEMATICALLY IDENTIFIED NOW

_50_ THROUGH TEST SCORES

_54_ THROUGH TEACHER/STAFF NOMINATIONS

_62_ THROUGH MONITORING STUDENT ACADEMIC RECORDS

_62_ THROUGH MONITORING STUDENT DISCIPLINARY RECORDS

____ OTHER (Please Specify)_____

_____

Use of Time

6. Have your district's school improvement efforts affected any of the following? (Check all that apply)

_23_ LENGTH OF SCHOOL YEAR

_31_ LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY

_35_ LENGTH OF CLASS PERIODS

_65_ TIME ALLOCATED TO ACADEMIC SKILLS

_50_ ENGAGED TIME

_58_ SERVICES TO STUDENTS BEYOND REGULAR SCHOOL HOURS

_69_ HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

7. If your district has made any change in use of time, has it affected: (Check all that apply)

_46_ A NEED FOR MORE STAFF

_62_ ADDED COSTS

_18_ OTHER IMPACTS (Please List) rearranged institutional priorities 15%

_____

8. Is your district engaged in any "time on task" studies?

_31_ YES (If yes, is a report available upon request? Yes____ No____)

_62_ NO

8 NO RESPONSE

Monitoring School Improvement

9. What measures or procedures are used by the district to monitor school improvement efforts? (Check all that apply.)

96 THE DISTRICT'S REGULAR TESTING PROGRAM

46 TEACHER-MADE TESTS

65 STUDENT GRADE REPORTS (PERCENT OF STUDENTS EARNING EACH GRADE A-F)

54 REGULAR SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORTS

73 STUDENT PROMOTIONS/RETENTIONS

58 PERCENT OF STUDENTS TAKING VARIOUS COURSES (ACADEMIC, ELECTIVE, REMEDIAL, ADVANCED PLACEMENT, HONORS, ETC.)

77 PERCENT OF STUDENTS PASSING GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

85 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

73 STUDENT REFERRALS FOR DISCIPLINARY PURPOSES AND ACTIONS TAKEN

46 SCHOOL VANDALISM MEASURES

65 STAFF SURVEYS/FEEDBACK

46 STUDENT ATTITUDE MEASURES

39 STUDENT SURVEYS/FEEDBACK

65 PARENT/COMMUNITY RESPONSE MEASURES

4 OTHER (Please List) _____

_____

10. With whom are the school effectiveness results shared? (Check all that apply.)

96 ADMINISTRATORS

92 SCHOOL STAFF

81 PARENTS

89 COMMUNITY

92 SCHOOL BOARD

62 STUDENTS

4 OTHERS (Please List) _____

_____

11. What impact, if any, has been noted so far from your school improvement efforts? (Check all that apply.)

12 NO IMPACT NOTED YET

8 LESS TEACHER TURNOVER

31 GREATER TEACHER SATISFACTION

81 INCREASED SCORES IN BASIC SKILLS BY STUDENTS

23 INCREASED SCORES IN AREAS OTHER THAN BASIC SKILLS

35 IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL

39 STUDENTS TAKING MORE ADVANCED COURSES

12 REDUCTIONS IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS NEEDING TO TAKE REMEDIAL COURSES

35 DECREASED VANDALISM

54 INCREASE IN STUDENT ATTENDANCE

73 INCREASED BUSINESS/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

4 OTHER (Please list)

12. Has your district increased the academic course graduation requirements since 1980?

81 YES

11 NO (Go to Question 17.)

8 NO RESPONSE

13. If the academic course graduation requirements have increased, what effects has it had on <u>teachers</u> of elective courses?

35 THE NUMBER OF ELECTIVES TEACHERS HAS REMAINED STABLE

35 WE LOST UP TO 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES TEACHERS

4 WE LOST OVER 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES TEACHERS

4 OTHER (Please list)_____

_____

14. What effects has change in graduation requirements had on the electives courses?

35 NONE NOTED YET

23 THE NUMBER OF ELECTIVES COURSES HAS REMAINED STABLE

27 WE LOST UP TO 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES COURSES

0 WE LOST OVER 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES COURSES

8 THE CONTENT OF OUR ELECTIVES COURSES HAS CHANGED

27 STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN ELECTIVE COURSES HAS DECREASED UP TO 20 PERCENT

8 STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN ELECTIVE COURSES HAS DECREASED OVER 20 PERCENT

8 ACADEMIC CREDIT IS NOW AWARDED FOR SOME VOCATIONAL COURSES

0 OTHER (Please list)_____

_____

15. Has the district initiated use of differential diplomas (college preparatory, technical, etc.) or diploma endorsements?

12 YES 65 NO 23 NOR RESPONSE

If yes, please describe_____

_____

16. What effects has increased graduation requirements had on your district? (Check all that apply.)

31 NONE NOTED YET

23 MORE REMEDIAL COURSES HAVE BEEN ADDED

27 STUDENTS ARE COMPLETING MORE DEMANDING COURSES

39 INCREASED TESTING HAS OCCURRED

4 ADDITIONAL LAW SUITS

39 INCREASED PARENT/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

4 DECREASED PARENT/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

27 COURSE EXPECTATIONS HAVE CHANGED

4 INCREASED STUDENT DROPOUTS

4 OTHER (Please specify)_____

_____

Student Performance Standards

17. Have your graduation requirements changed since 1980?

81 YES 15 NO 4 NO RESPONSE

18. How many Carnegie units of credit (or equivalent) are now required for graduation? (54,55)

____UNITS 10-18 units 20%, 19 units 8%; 20 units 12%, 21 units 19%
22 units 8%, 24 units 8%, more than 24 units 12%

19. How many credits, if any, are required in the following areas? (Use 0 if none are required.)

____ENGLISH 3 units 19%, 4 units 62%, no response 19%

____MATHEMATICS 1 units 8%, 2 units 50%, 3 units 16%, 4 units 8%, no response 19%

____SCIENCE 1 unit 31%, 2 units 39%, 3 units 16%, 4 units 4%, no response 10%

____SOCIAL STUDIES 1 unit 4%, 2 units 23%, 3 units 50%, 4 units 8%, no response 15%

____FOREIGN LANGUAGE 1 unit 12%, 2 units 4%, no response 84%

____VOCATIONAL EDUCATION 1 unit 8%, 2 units 4%, 3 units 4%, 4 units 8%, no response 76%

____OTHER AREAS (Please specify.)_____

_____

20. Are student performance standards (other than required units of credit) required for graduation?

58 ____YES 39 ____NO (Go to Question 22.) 3 NO RESPONSE

21. Describe student performance standards (other than required units of credit) required for graduation.

_____

_____

_____

Instructional Strategies

22. Have your district's secondary school improvement efforts affected changes in instructional practices?

80 YES 12 NO 8 NO RESPONSE

23. What changes in instructional practices have occurred? For each area below check if the practice has increased as a result of School Effectiveness efforts.

	Increased Greatly	Increased Slightly	No Change	No Response
THE CURRICULUM IS BASED ON CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	50	31	8	12
HIGH EXPECTATIONS EXIST FOR STUDENT LEARNING	58	23	4	15
HIGH EXPECTATIONS EXIST FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION	50	31	4	15
STUDENTS ARE CAREFULLY ORIENTED TO LESSONS	23	58	4	15
INSTRUCTION IS CLEAR AND FOCUSED	46	35	4	15
LEARNING PROGRESS IS MONITORED CLOSELY	46	39	8	8
STUDENTS WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND ARE RETAUGHT	35	42	8	15
CLASS TIME IS USED FOR LEARNING	31	46	4	19
CLASSROOM ROUTINES ARE SMOOTH AND EFFICIENT	15	62	4	19
STUDENTS ARE GROUPED TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION	23	35	23	19
STANDARDS FOR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR ARE EXPLICIT	42	35	12	12
PERSONAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ARE POSITIVE	23	50	12	15
INCENTIVES AND REWARDS ARE USED TO BUILD MOTIVATION	19	42	23	15
DISCIPLINE IS FIRM AND CONSISTENT	27	46	12	15
PARENTS ARE INVOLVED	31	46	8	15

Thanks for completing and returning this survey to Dr. Robert E. Blum, NWREL, 300 S.W. 6th Ave., Portland, OR 97204.

APPENDIX D

GREAT CITY SCHOOLS SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STUDY

PRINCIPAL'S SURVEY

71 Schools

Your Name_____

School Schools reported per district: one 30, two 23, three 17, four 1

District 28 districts reporting

Work Telephone Number ( )

Policy and Planning Statements

1. Does your school have policy or planning statements developed since 1980 that cover any of the areas listed below? Please check those areas explicitly covered and attach a copy of the policy or plan. If no policy or plan exists in an area but it is a major emerging concern, please check the second column.

	Percent Have a Plan or Policy	A Major Emerging Concern
CRITERIA DEFINING THE SCHOOL'S VISION OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE	68	27
PRIORITY GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT	83	13
HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE	80	18
THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER	68	25
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT NEEDS AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS	62	30
MONITORING OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	72	21
STANDARDS FOR STUDENT CONDUCT	94	1
STANDARDS FOR PROMOTION OR GRADUATION	96	3
REWARDS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	78	14
REWARDS FOR STAFF PERFORMANCE	39	48
INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE	63	23
HOMEWORK	78	18
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	68	23

	Have a Plan or Policy	A Major Emerging Concern
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE	69	20
ALIGNMENT OF OBJECTIVES, CURRICULUM AND TESTING	66	24
REORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL OR STUDENTS	47	24

OTHER (Please list) School-business partnership, discipline policy

District Administrative Support

2. In what ways does the district provide support for various school improvement efforts? For each area listed below, please indicate if the district plays a major role, minor role or no role at the present time.

In relation to school improvement efforts our district:	Major Role	Minor Role	No Role	No Response
SETS UP PROCEDURES TO MONITOR AND SUPPORT LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	65	31	3	1
ESTABLISHES PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATING AMONG SCHOOL EFFORTS	58	34	4	4
SELECTS AND ASSIGNS STAFF TO ENHANCE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS	54	30	11	5
DEVELOPS AND REFINES INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES	76	17	6	1
CONDUCTS TESTING AND MONITORING	80	13	7	0
PROVIDES ADMINISTRATIVE INSERVICE	72	27	0	1
PROVIDES TEACHER INSERVICE	66	31	1	1
COLLECTS AND/OR CONDUCTS AND SHARES RESEARCH FINDINGS	73	23	3	1
ASSISTS WITH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	76	20	4	0
CONDUCTS TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT	49	38	11	1
SCREENS AND SELECTS TEXTS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS	82	13	6	0

In relation to school improvement efforts our district:	Major Role	Minor Role	No Role	No Response
ESTABLISHES DISTRICTWIDE PRIORITY GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT	93	6	0	1
ASSISTS SCHOOLS IN OBTAINING NEEDED RESOURCES	79	17	1	3
COMMUNICATES LOCAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FINDINGS TO STAFF AND COMMUNITY	62	28	3	7

OTHER (Please list) PR support 6%

Provides quality education for special education students 6%

Special Needs Students

3. Are your school's improvement efforts targeted to any special student populations?

56 YES (If yes to which populations) school leavers 6%, educationally disadvantaged 6%, potential dropouts 6%, gifted 4%, freshmen 3%

44 NO

4. Are there any segments of students not being reached by your school improvement efforts?

35 YES If yes, which groups? School leavers 4%, those with negative attitudes 3%

65 NO

5. How are potential school leavers being identified? (Check all that apply)

16 NOT BEING SYSTEMATICALLY IDENTIFIED NOW

45 THROUGH TEST SCORES

61 THROUGH TEACHER/STAFF NOMINATIONS

82 THROUGH MONITORING STUDENT ACADEMIC RECORDS

80 THROUGH MONITORING STUDENT DISCIPLINARY RECORDS

___ OTHER (Please Specify)

Use of Time

6. Have your school's improvement efforts affected any of the following? (Check all that apply)

10 LENGTH OF SCHOOL YEAR

13 LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY

11 LENGTH OF CLASS PERIODS

55 TIME ALLOCATED TO ACADEMIC SKILLS

47 ENGAGED TIME

56 SERVICES TO STUDENTS BEYOND REGULAR SCHOOL HOURS

56 HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

7. If your school has made any change in use of time, has it affected: (Check all that apply)

30 A NEED FOR MORE STAFF

20 ADDED COSTS

___ OTHER IMPACTS (Please List) Additional staff meeting time 6%

Rearrangement of instructional priorities 3%

8. Is your school engaged in any "time on task" studies?

8 YES (If yes, is a report available upon request? Yes___ No___)

71 NO

Monitoring School Improvement

9. What measures or procedures are used to monitor school improvement efforts? (Check all that apply.)

90 THE DISTRICT'S REGULAR TESTING PROGRAM

66 TEACHER-MADE TESTS

86 STUDENT GRADE REPORTS (PERCENT OF STUDENTS EARNING EACH GRADE A-F)

68 REGULAR SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORTS

76 STUDENT PROMOTIONS/RETENTIONS

68 PERCENT OF STUDENTS TAKING VARIOUS COURSES (ACADEMIC, ELECTIVE, REMEDIAL, ADVANCED PLACEMENT, HONORS, ETC.)

73 PERCENT OF STUDENTS PASSING GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

94 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

83 STUDENT REFERRALS FOR DISCIPLINARY PURPOSES AND ACTIONS TAKEN

38 SCHOOL VANDALISM MEASURES

56 STAFF SURVEYS/FEEDBACK

42 STUDENT ATTITUDE MEASURES

55 STUDENT SURVEYS/FEEDBACK

52 PARENT/COMMUNITY RESPONSE MEASURES

___ OTHER (Please List) Inhouse suspension programs 10%

10. With whom are the school effectiveness results shared? (Check all that apply.)

99 ADMINISTRATORS

94 SCHOOL STAFF

90 PARENTS

76 COMMUNITY

68 SCHOOL BOARD

73 STUDENTS

___ OTHERS (Please List) State school improvement committee 6%

feeder schools 3%

11. What impact, if any, has been noted so far from your school improvement efforts? (Check all that apply.)

11 NO IMPACT NOTED YET

21 LESS TEACHER TURNOVER

51 GREATER TEACHER SATISFACTION

65 INCREASED SCORES IN BASIC SKILLS BY STUDENTS

32 INCREASED SCORES IN AREAS OTHER THAN BASIC SKILLS

65 IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL

45 STUDENTS TAKING MORE ADVANCED COURSES

18 REDUCTIONS IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS NEEDING TO TAKE REMEDIAL COURSES

44 DECREASED VANDALISM

58 INCREASE IN STUDENT ATTENDANCE

55 INCREASED BUSINESS/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

___ OTHER (Please list) Increased parental involvement 7%

12. Has your district increased the academic course graduation requirements since 1980?

90 YES

10 NO (Go to Question 17.)

13. If the academic course graduation requirements have increased, what effects has it had on teachers of elective courses?

49 THE NUMBER OF ELECTIVES TEACHERS HAS REMAINED STABLE

24 WE LOST UP TO 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES TEACHERS

4 WE LOST OVER 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES TEACHERS

___ OTHER (Please list) Minor loss of elective teachers 11%

14. What effects has change in graduation requirements had on the electives courses?

31 NONE NOTED YET

17 THE NUMBER OF ELECTIVES COURSES HAS REMAINED STABLE

25 WE LOST UP TO 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES COURSES

1 WE LOST OVER 20 PERCENT OF OUR ELECTIVES COURSES

17 THE CONTENT OF OUR ELECTIVES COURSES HAS CHANGED

21 STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN ELECTIVE COURSES HAS DECREASED UP TO 20 PERCENT

7 STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN ELECTIVE COURSES HAS DECREASED OVER 20 PERCENT

9 ACADEMIC CREDIT IS NOW AWARDED FOR SOME VOCATIONAL COURSES

___ OTHER (Please list) Passing benchmark tests will be a requisite of graduation 3%

15. Has your school initiated use of differential diplomas (college preparatory, technical, etc.) or diploma endorsements?

35 YES 65 NO

If yes, please describe diploma endorsements 7%, academic diplomas 4%

16. What effects has increased graduation requirements had on your school? (Check all that apply.)

28 NONE NOTED YET

30 MORE REMEDIAL COURSES HAVE BEEN ADDED

41 STUDENTS ARE COMPLETING MORE DEMANDING COURSES

32 INCREASED TESTING HAS OCCURRED

0 ADDITIONAL LAW SUITS

24 INCREASED PARENT/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

0 DECREASED PARENT/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

28 COURSE EXPECTATIONS HAVE CHANGED

13 INCREASED STUDENT DROPOUTS

___ OTHER (Please specify) Increased awareness to take upper level courses 4%; business community support 3%, business community report 3%, sense of accomplishment 3%.

17. Are student performance standards (other than required units of credit) required for graduation?

51 YES 42 NO (Go to Question 19.)

7 No Response

18. Describe student performance standards (other than required units of credit) required for graduation.

_____

_____

_____

Instructional Strategies

19. Have your school improvement efforts affected changes in instructional practices?

76 YES 10 NO

13 No Response

20. What changes in instructional practices have occurred? For each area below check if the practice has increased as a result of School Effectiveness efforts.

	Increased Greatly	Increased Slightly	No Change	No Response
THE CURRICULUM IS BASED ON CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	44	45	4	7
HIGH EXPECTATIONS EXIST FOR STUDENT LEARNING	48	42	4	6
HIGH EXPECTATIONS EXIST FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION	49	39	9	3
STUDENTS ARE CAREFULLY ORIENTED TO LESSONS	31	55	9	6
INSTRUCTION IS CLEAR AND FOCUSED	38	44	9	10

	Increased Greatly	Increased Slightly	No Change	No Response
LEARNING PROGRESS IS MONITORED CLOSELY	41	44	9	7
STUDENTS WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND ARE RETAUGHT	21	51	18	10
CLASS TIME IS USED FOR LEARNING	28	44	17	11
CLASSROOM ROUTINES ARE SMOOTH AND EFFICIENT	25	44	20	11
STUDENTS ARE GROUPED TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION	34	31	24	11
STANDARDS FOR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR ARE EXPLICIT	44	34	11	11
PERSONAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ARE POSITIVE	23	49	17	11
INCENTIVES AND REWARDS ARE USED TO BUILD MOTIVATION	27	34	27	13
DISCIPLINE IS FIRM AND CONSISTENT	45	32	14	9
PARENTS ARE INVOLVED	18	47	23	13

Thanks for completing and returning this survey to Dr. Robert E. Blum, NWREL, 300 S.W. 6th Ave., Portland, OR 97204.

APPENDIX E

NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS RECEIVED BY NWREL
REGARDING DISTRICT SUPPORT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

	Support Area	Number Received
1.	Sets up procedures to monitor and support local school improvement efforts	14
2.	Establishes procedures for coordination among school efforts	8
3.	Selects and assigns staff to enhance school improvement efforts	4
4.	Develops and refines instructional objectives	10
5.	Conducts testing and monitoring	6
6.	Provides administrative inservice	7
7.	Provides teacher inservice	9
8.	Collects and/or conducts and shares research findings	1
9.	Assists with curriculum development	5
10.	Conducts teacher needs assessment	1
11.	Screens and selects texts and resource materials	3
12.	Establishes districtwide priority goals for improvement	10
13.	Assists schools in obtaining needed resources	5
14.	Communicates local school improvement findings to staff and community	5

APPENDIX F

SOME ISSUES RAISED IN REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF

"PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE CGCS SECONDARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STUDY"

JULY 1985, PORTLAND, OREGON

Equity	How do we see that all students are participating in the gains observed? How do we ensure a special focus on the students most "at risk"? How do we recognize and deal forthrightly with the special needs of many of our students without seeming to make excuses or to offend? "Poor in the pocket does not necessarily make for poverty of spirit."
Cooperation	How do we help the community, parents, students, and other local, state, and federal agencies recognize and assume their share of the responsibility for assisting students at risk become productive members of society?
District and School Roles	How do we provide central vision, leadership, goals, standards, support, and accountability while fostering local school ownership, creativity, and initiative in implementation?
Timing	To what extent are the positive (and negative) outcomes observed to date reflective of the fact that in general local, state, and school requirements for change have not yet had an opportunity to take effect? Should we repeat this study in 3-5 years?
Staff	How will we be able to keep, recruit and support the staff necessary to keep moving forward?
	How to identify, encourage, reward, keep, and bring along promising present and future school and district leaders?
	How to include our best teachers in the leadership function without removing them from teaching?
Relationship to Elementary	How do we integrate secondary school improvement efforts with elementary and pre-school experience?